

the ground in chunks and sank
in — reminding me of how heavy
the box had been when the
undertaker had first handed
it to me in evansville, indiana.

CHICAGO, APRIL 1994

chicago is nothing like
new orleans; i thought
that perhaps it might be.

we're driving around,
looking for a park that
some kid at the art
institute told us about;
said that the rent was
cheap and that it was
safe too. got lost,

i guess, since we ended
up in cabrini green. all
black skins out in the
street, holding up fifty-
five gallon drums one of
them with fire coming out
the top, thats what my
lady said, i didnt see it

too busy watching the street
and the kids darting in and
out of traffic; all of them
wearing clothes that did
not fit; once white t-shirts
hanging around battered knees.

i figure its too damn bad for
all those kids; tooling around
on flat tires and warped rims;
but this place isnt a goddamn
thing like new orleans. i
dont see jesus anywhere and
all i want to do is get out.

SMITTY, 2

i figure that esther will
have some trouble with it
later on; for awhile im
not able to figure out
the thinking of it all;

watching the gun come
out and realizing that
it wasn't aimed at you,
feeling relief and then

horror, knowing and not
able to do anything but
watch as the gun took the
back of his head off;

slumping back on the
couch, aware that this
was wrong, final. i

don't think that i could
sleep in the same house,
collapse tired from work
on the same sofa again,
knowing that fragments of
his brain were there;

somewhere.

— Tom Caufield

Iowa City IA

RICKY WITH THE TUFT AND A PRINCESS WITH A SMALL BRAIN

When Ricky with the Tuft was born
to a queen who knew he'd one day take the throne
she cried out in horror because he was so ugly.
His face was scrunched up like an old man's
and his skin was tough as a cheap walking shoe,
not soft like most babies'. His head
was bald except for a single bunch of weeds
growing straight up from crown of his head.
Thus, his name. Thus, the constant teasing.
To compensate, Ricky with the Tuft
was a delightful child. He could add five or six
numbers without using a pen or his fingers.
He memorized the movements of musical pieces
having heard them just once. He could render
a person's likeness with paint and a brush.
He was insightful and kind when he discussed world affairs.
When it was time to marry, he chose
the most beautiful in all the land. She was the princess
who was as dumb as she was fair.
Some say her brain was so small at birth
that she didn't learn to speak until she was ten
and that she still couldn't hold a fork very well.